



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/626,066	07/26/2000	Frederick E Mootz	MST-1997.1Cup Handling SU	8117
7590	12/08/2003		EXAMINER	
John M Paolino Bayer Corporation 511 Benedict Avenue Tarrytown, NY 10591			HANDY, DWAYNE K	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1743	

DATE MAILED: 12/08/2003

3

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.	Applicant(s)
09/626,066	MOOTZ ET AL.
Examiner	Art Unit
Dwayne K Handy	1743

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on _____.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-35 and 59 is/are pending in the application.
 - 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 1-35 and 59 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 13) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application) since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.
 - a) The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 14) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121 since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.

Attachment(s)

- 1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____.
- 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____.
- 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Double Patenting

1. The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. See *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and, *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.130(b).

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

2. Claims 1-35 and 61 rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-36 of U.S. Patent No. 6,117,391. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because the claims of the patent contain all of the features of claims 1-35 and 61, plus an additional limitation in the independent patented claims 1, 19, and 36. Therefore, the claims of the patent anticipate the instant claims.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

3. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

Art Unit: 1743

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

4. Claims 1, 3, 8 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Ward (5,067,308). Ward teaches a mechanism and method for supporting and individually dispensing nested containers. The device is generally shown in Figure 1 and described in column 3, lines 35-48. The apparatus has a supply container (10) that is suitable for holding cups (12) in a stack (14). The supply tube is fixedly attached to flat frame or platform (26) with a central opening (28). The Examiner considers this platform to be analogous to the escapement of the instant claims.

The platform containing the opening is best shown in the remaining Figures and described in columns 3 and 4. Figure 2 shows the platform from the top. Attached to the top of the platform is a pair of support plates (30, 32) connected to actuators (38, 40). The support plates engage the containers (12) above the platform. Now referring to Figure 6, there is a second pair of coplanar support plates (46, 48) attached to the bottom of the platform and surrounding opening (28). The second pair of support plates (46, 48) are coupled to a pair of thrusting fingers (66, 68) which operate to impart a downward force to the lowermost container (70) during dispensing operations. The Examiner considers the first support plates (30, 32) as corresponding to the "first leaf" of the instant claim and the second support plates (46, 48) as the "second leaf". They are attached to the platform which has a top and bottom side and moveable between different positions for engaging the cups through the opening in the platform when dispensing the cups.

Inventorship

5. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

6. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

7. Claim 15 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ward (5,067,308). Ward, as described above in paragraph 4, teaches every element of claim 14 except for a plurality of supply tubes. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, however, to provide a plurality of supply tubes. The addition of more cup supply tubes would allow for a greater number of cups to be dispensed and thus more samples processed in the analyzer.

Conclusion

8. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Smith, Jr. (4,699,306) teaches a plug feeding system with elements that contact the plug at the top and bottom as the plug passes through the bottom opening of the plug holder. Blom (4,742,937) shows a cup dispenser with retaining elements with inclined surfaces that protrude from the sides of the dispenser opening. Schrum (892,688), Gould et al. (2,726,026), Hackett (2,099,267), and Makibbin (2,529,222) teach vending machines with dispensing elements. Calhoun et al. (5,511,690) teaches an automated cuvette feeder. Kelln (5,250,440) and Sakurada (4,260,581) teach automatic analyzing devices with container dispensers. Carew et al. (3,010,263), Loeser (3,057,515), Nyblom (3,186,594), Falk et al. (3,795,344), and Mayer (3,842,533) show dispensers for cups or cup-like containers.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Dwayne K Handy whose telephone number is (703)-305-0211. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8:00-4:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jill Warden can be reached on (703)-308-4037. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703)-872-9310.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703)-308-0661.

Dkh
December 1, 2003


Jill Warden
Supervisory Patent Examiner
Technology Center 1700